COLOMBIA'S NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY, A NEW "COIN" APPROACH

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COLOMBIA'S NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY, A NEW "COIN" APPROACH

by

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ABSTRACT

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This study analyzes the impact of the Government of Colombia's new National Security Strategy (NSS) over the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) long term strategic plans. For more than five decades Colombia has suffered the terrible spiral of violence. A broad mix of criminal actors representing the far left or right of the political spectrum, supported by narcotics trafficking, have endangered the country's process of democratic consolidation. This terrible path brought death, economic depravation and social unrest. During this time, political parties ranging from socialist liberals to conservatives tried to achieve peace and stability. However, none of them managed to reach a successful solution to these problems, because of their lack of strategic leadership to bring the country out of failure.

COLOMBIA'S NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY, A NEW "COIN" APPROACH

Security is not achieved simply through the efforts of the Armed Forces and the National Police. This is an effort of the entire State and of all Colombians. A strong State structure, supported by citizen solidarity, guarantees the rule of law and the respect of rights and civil liberties.[1]

—Alvaro Uribe Velez
President of Colombia

For more than four decades Colombia has suffered the terrible consequences of the protracted nature of Revolutionary War (RW).[2] A broad mix of terrorist actors representing the far left or right of the political spectrum, supported by the traffic of narcotics, has endangered the country's process of democratic consolidation. During this time the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia known by the Spanish acronym of FARC, followed the traditional Marxist strategy termed as "the combination of all forms of struggle".

Throughout the years, elected governments have used different strategic approaches to confront this revolutionary threat, but none succeeded. The absence of a national counter insurgency (COIN) strategy and the idea of negotiating peace processes from a weak stand became part of the nation's strategic culture.[3] These failed political attempts, combined with weak political institutions, economic under development, the rise of narco-trafficking, political corruption and a military stalemate in the battlefield among many other factors, brought Colombia's democratic society close to capitulation.

On May 31, 2002, and after three years of failed negotiations with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), Colombians elected President Alvaro Uribe with a clear mandate of rescuing democracy. During his presidential campaign he

offered a vision, a coherent plan and the necessary resources to save Colombia called

Democratic Security and Defense Policy (DSDP).[4]

Despite the FARC's efforts to kill him while campaigning, he openly asked his

supporters to take a hard stand against terrorism and as Winston Churchill did during

War World II, he only offered "sweat, blood, and tears" to his constituency. Today, the

successes achieved by President Uribe's government have proven that a democracy

can win the war against terrorism.

REPUBLIC OF COLOMBIA
- Size: 1'138, 910 sq km
- Population: 44,379,598 (July 2007 est.)
- Land boundaries: 6,309 km
- Border countries: Brazil 1,644 km, Ecuador 590 km, Panama 225 km, Peru 1,800 km, Venezuela 2,050 km.
- Natural resources: Petroleum, natural gas, coal, iron ore, nickel, gold, copper, emeralds, hydropower.
- Ethnic groups: Mestizo 58%, white 20%, mulatto 14%, black 4%, mixed black-Amerindian 3%, Amerindian 1%.
- Religion: Roman Catholic 90%, other 10%.
- Literacy: 92.8%.
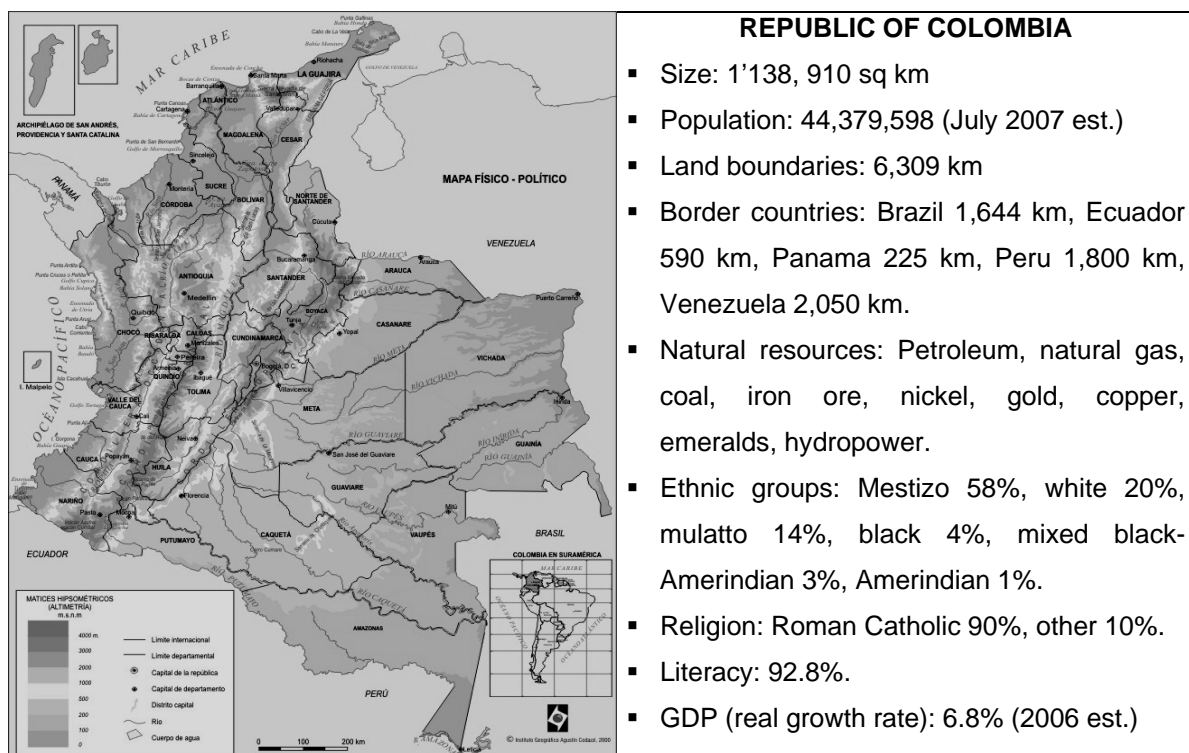- GDP (real growth rate): 6.8% (2006 est.)

Figure 1: Information obtained from the CIA World Fact Book, 2007.

This study analyzes the impact of the Government of Colombia's new National

Security Strategy (NSS) over the FARC's long term strategic plans.[5] To illustrate this, I

will initially provide an understanding of the FARC's strategic culture, doctrine and an

analysis of their strategic environment from the systems perspective. Afterwards, I will

discuss the government's new strategic response, the President's strategic vision and

leadership, a new view of civil-military relations and military strategy, Plan Colombia and Plan Patriota and National Security Strategy achievements. Finally, by understanding the impact of what has been achieved, I will be able to provide some conclusions and recommendations for the road ahead.

<u>The FARC's Strategic Culture and Doctrine</u>

The origins of guerrilla warfare can be traced far back in the history of war. Throughout this time, different revolutionary strategies have been tested to gain control of nations, countries and their governments all over the world. However, it was only until the twentieth century that this concept evolved into a more dangerous phenomenon called revolutionary warfare. Bernard B. Fall superbly defined it saying that "revolutionary warfare equals guerrilla warfare plus political action" or (RW = GW + PA).[6]

In his writings, Bard O'Neal states that "Strategy is defined as a systematic, integrated, and orchestrated use of various means to achieve goals. What kind of goals are chosen, which means are emphasized, and how systematic the plans are will differ from case to case."[7]

The protracted popular war was designed by Mao Tse-tung in China. This concept is "undoubtedly the most conceptually elaborate and perhaps the most widely copied insurgent strategy."[8] According to Mao "the revolutionary struggle would be a long one and the peasantry, not the urban proletariat, was the most important revolutionary class."[9]

The FARC decided to follow this model mainly because "previously successful insurgent leaders were able to convince others that the strategy had universal

applicability."[10] Their strategic thinking and planning is carried out by the national

guerrilla conferences. During these meetings the organization's objectives, actions and

lines of operations are analyzed, evaluated and synchronized.[11] At the end of this

process, the conference conclusions become the "road map" for the years to follow.[12]

This Maoist theory consists of three sequential phases, each of which differs with

respect to the correlation of forces: (1) strategic defensive, (2) strategic stalemate, (3)

strategic offensive.[13]

The FARC's Strategic Defensive Phase

The first phase called "strategic defensive" is of great importance for the whole

revolutionary process. During this phase, "the insurgents concentrate in their survival

using the hit and run tactics, the political organization and low-level violence."[14] At this

point, if the guerrillas call the full attention of the government, they can be easily

destroyed and the whole revolutionary project will collapse. The real danger of this

phase is that if it goes unnoticed, the insurgents will be able to build their political and

military apparatus without the knowledge of the government in power.

Since its foundation in 1964, Colombia's FARC has been able to slowly reach

most of the country's territory. Their political and military structures spent years in the

countryside planting the seeds of revolution. Despite active guerrilla operations in areas

where they had a more mature battlefield, for two decades their strategic posture was

mainly defensive.

The seventh Guerrilla Conference of 1982 marked the end of the strategic

defensive phase. From them on, the FARC adopted a more conventional approach in

the way they operate which marked the beginning of a new era.[15] Soon, the state was

no longer confronting small guerrillas, but rather companies, fronts, blocks, mobile columns and unified central command. This organizational change was decisive for their strategic development and it allowed them to jump into the second phase of "strategic stalemate".

The FARC's Strategic Stalemate Phase

This phase is the second and largest. Its main characteristic is guerrilla warfare, but "If the guerrillas face significant opposition, they have the option of reverting to stage one."[16] To be able to enter this phase, the insurgent organization must understand the vitality of the incumbent regime, its projected capabilities against guerrilla warfare, and the external political and military factors.[17] In sum, the depth and the acuity of the existing problems is what makes a country more vulnerable than other.[18]

By the early 1990's, the FARC had a clear understanding of the vulnerabilities of Colombia's democracy: weak political and judicial institutions, government corruption, massive development of narcotics trafficking and an emerging illegal economy. Nationally, Colombia's environment was fueled by widespread violence and turmoil. A large variety of terrorist organizations such as the National Liberation Army (ELN), the Popular Liberation Army (EPL), the 19th of April Movement (M-19), and right wing insurgencies under the acronym of (AUC) among many others threatened the country's existence. At the same time, the traffic of narcotics reached its high, the illegal economy became part of the daily life of many localities, thousands of people abandoned the country and foreign investment almost stopped.

Civilian governments tried a variety of approaches to confront these threats. Some governments used the military as "fire fighters" to suppress the most violent threat of the

moment. Others used softer courses of action that included peace talks, political concessions and economic incentives. At the end, there was never a long term structural solution. The state posture had one common denominator: The absence of a national security strategy that includes strengthening the military forces and national police.

This chaos and violence helped the FARC's strategic plans. While the military was consumed in fighting other insurgencies including the drug cartels, the FARC were given an open field to double their size and quietly jump start their political structure. At this point, Colombia's leadership did not have the wisdom or the moral courage to confront the dangers of the FARC's strategic plans. Now, the conditions were ready for the FARC to go into the final phase of the people's war construct: the "strategic offensive".

The FARC's Strategic Offensive Phase

According to O'Neal, during this final phase "the insurgency moved from guerrilla warfare to mobile conventional attacks on a large scale, and the political and psychological effects of the insurgent victories lead to the collapse of the government."[19]

By 1998, the FARC had mastered Mao's theory by the book. Massive attacks over platoon, company and even battalion size posts, became part of the country's life. Surprise attacks over the military bases of Patascoy, Las Delicias and Miraflores, among many others remain a part of Colombians memories. A poorly trained and dispersed military, was confronting mass attacks in the form of Vietnam human waves.

For the first time, more than 15 FARC fronts surrounded the capital city of Bogotá. Killing, kidnapping and extortion were at their high and attacks over small localities or the economic infrastructure occurred on a daily basis. At this point, the enemy was confronting a terrorized government with little international support, an overwhelmed military and a civil population that was begging the government to negotiate under the enemy's conditions. By 1998, the FARC's application of the people's war construct brought Colombia to a "point of no return."

Understanding the FARC's Strategic and Operational Environment

The FARC's strategic and operational strength can not only be based on the application of a doctrinal concept. Mao's theory of war is irrelevant in an environmental vacuum. A certain set of conditions, circumstances and influences must exist for this application to be successful. It is because of the differences between environments that Mao's model has no universal applicability.

In order to understand the different characteristics of the FARC's environment it's important to establish a methodology. The theoretical approach of seeing the FARC as a "biological organism composed of discrete systems," could be helpful to examine this terrorist organization.[20] These systems have different degrees of power, influence and capabilities, and operate at different speeds. They could be viewed as the FARC's sources of energy. At the same time, they interact, support and affect each other.
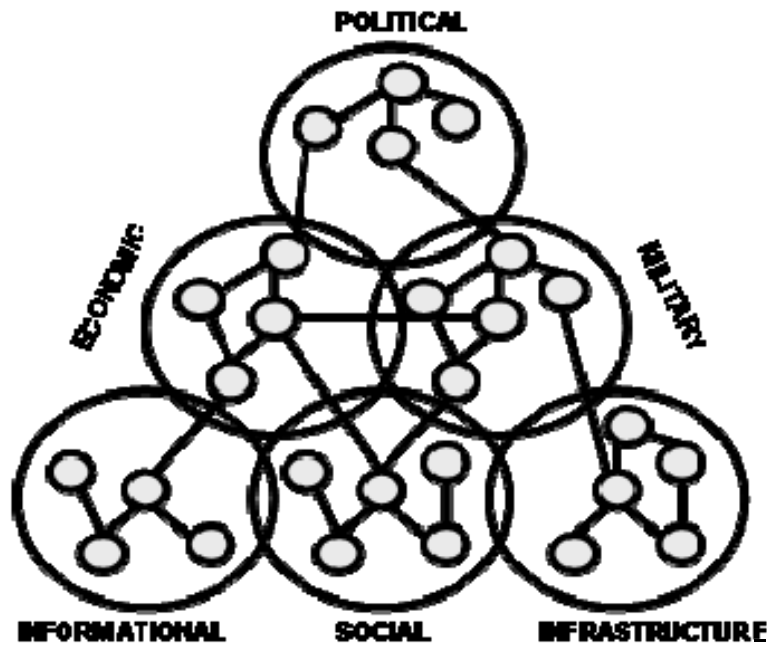
Figure 2: FARC's Interrelated Systems.

Under this approach "the key is to think of the enemy as a related set of systems. By using this rationale a strategist could distinguish the important systems and avoid wasting effort on less critical targets."[21] Analyzing the FARC's political, ideological, military, economic, and infrastructure systems could serve to understand the FARC as an active organism capable of generating extreme violence.

The FARC's Political System

Under the people's war construct, armed action is subordinated to the political struggle. The lethality of this combination is what will produce social mobilization and seizure of state control. For years the FARC's political system has benefited from the turbulence created by internal and external factors.

Internally, the evil combination of the legality of the Colombian Communist Party (PCC) and the illegality of the Clandestine Communist Party of Colombia (PC3) has played a vital role.[22] As a product of the Cold War, the Colombian Communist Party

exercised an aggressive opposition to the state. At the national, regional and local level, they tried to undermine important anti-terrorist legislation or initiatives to strengthen Colombia's democracy. By directly influencing labor unions and social organizations the Colombian Communist Party generated turmoil, severely affecting the public order and exacerbating political confrontation. Quietly, the collapse of the Soviet Union caused the divorce between the Colombian Communist Party and the FARC.

As a result of these changes, the FARC secretariat assumed both the political and military responsibilities of the revolution.[23] Specifically, the Clandestine Communist Party of Colombia became the primary political front of the FARC. This clandestine organization has worked very hard in trying to reorganize the proletariat in the cities and the peasantry in the rural areas.[24]

One of the key elements of their strategy has been the progressive destruction of local power. To achieve this political objective, the Clandestine Communist Party of Colombia has exercised two types of influences: reasoning or force. The first way has been called "co-government", an approach in which they exercised indirect power over the legally elected authorities, to influence political decisions and local budgets. The other approach consisted of "selective assassination" in coordination with urban militias of any possible competitor.

This last terrifying approach to politics has resulted in the extermination of hundreds of city mayors, councilmen, judges and local politicians. According to the Colombian Federation of Municipalities, by September 2003, there where 250 local mayors out of 1,098 exercising their duties from other cities, because of the threat and

the lack of political guaranties.[25] For years this evil combination helped the FARC to become "the state within the state" in many parts of the country.

Externally, the FARC's strategy has been to affect the country's international prestige. In this purpose, they have tried to gain support from the international left represented by governments and non state actors. Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) have played a key role, because of their capacity to put diplomatic pressure on the Colombian government. A well orchestrated lobby has hampered Colombian efforts in areas like businesses, trade, or human rights.

The FARC's international front has played an important role in crafting these relationships. Their so called "ambassadors" received international recognition as well as political and economic support. It is even common to see direct participation of foreign citizens inside the FARC ranks. Only when the Global War on Terror was declared was the government of Colombia able to prompt the United States and the European Union to include the FARC in the list of world terrorist organizations.[26]

The FARC's Ideological System

Even today, mass mobilization continues to be the golden key of the people's war construct. A revolution can not be launched from the rural areas into the urban centers without an open support of the masses. For this reason, winning the people's "hearts and minds" becomes the organization's center of gravity.

In 1979, the Nicaraguan Revolution revived the guerrilla myth as a way to take power in Latin America.[27] These revolutionary achievements validated the applicability of this model in Colombia. As a result, the FARC gave high priority to the indoctrination of combatants and civilians. When in their base areas, especially selected ideologies

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assumed this responsibility. In the past a more defensive state posture facilitated this continuous process, especially in those territories out of the government's reach.

The end of global communism had a major impact upon the FARC's revolutionary plans. Affected by the forces of change, they reached the "tipping point" of their ideological struggle. After finding themselves with no source of economic income, they turned to the narcotics industry to provide what they had lost. By adopting drug trafficking as the new financial source they were able to continue and even improve their revolutionary project.

This strategic decision had a huge contradictory impact over the course of the revolution. Financially, narco-trafficking made them self-sufficient, but ideologically, becoming a drug cartel rapidly eroded their revolutionary beliefs. Today, FARC's internal propaganda is a contradictory mix of a little of Marxist-Maoist propaganda with words like cocaine, heroin, precursors, kilograms, laboratories and shipments.

The FARC indiscriminate application of terrorism against civilians has also contributed to this ideological demise. The systematic assassination of innocent people as well as attacks over the poorest towns and basic infrastructure has produced a counter effect that made the populace oppose the group that pledges to defend them. Therefore, the FARC's revolutionary project is a doctrinal contradiction, because it exists without the support of the masses. The use of drug trafficking and terrorism as ways to achieve political ends, have clearly alienated the FARC from the masses, undermining at the same time its ideological system.

The FARC's Militarily System

For the last two decades, the FARC's military strategy has been influenced by the lessons learned from regional insurgencies and local revolutionary projects. The FARC's secretariat carefully studied the strategic approaches made by insurgencies in Guatemala, El Salvador and Peru. Some examples of the lessons learned and applied from these revolutions were: the consolidation of all insurgency efforts under one a unified front, the creation of a Joint General Staff, and the extension of support nets.[28]

In 1982, the seventh guerrilla conference designed a series of strategic objectives in order to "build strength in a gradual fashion rather than seize power in a lightning strike."[29] By the 1990s, their strategic goal became the creation of an "army of the people" capable of potentially seizing the state power. In order to reach this point, they decided to urbanize the conflict (it assigned strategic level to the urban fight), to create a center for strategic deployment, to expand its fronts to 48, to create a strategic corridor from their heartland to Venezuela and to penetrate the masses at universities, unions and local levels.[30] In their view, the new strategic equation was formed by combining military power, territorial control and their impressive war machine. The strategic changes made in the early 1990s became the pillars of their military strategic offensive.

The FARC's Economic System

The FARC's successes in the political and military domains were directly related to "the construction of a war economy, based on the appropriation of natural resources and the systematic extortion of its producers."[31] These actions combined with narco-trafficking, kidnapping and the influence of modern communications has produced an illegal multi-million dollar industry.

The history of the relationship between the FARC and narco-trafficking is long and it began even before the Soviet Union collapsed. Initially, the organization was involved in the initial growing and producing phase. Once they master their learning curve, they assume total control of the whole cocaine process. Today, most of their fronts have the ability to grow, produce, refine, transport, commercialize cocaine and launder its profits, becoming the biggest drug cartel of the world.

Kidnappings and extortion are by themselves a completely different illegal industry. Throughout the years the FARC learned the terrible tactics and techniques of these two economic tools. In Colombia, people of all ages, gender and social conditions have suffered the consequences of kidnapping or extortion. Even diplomats, foreign citizens, and multinational companies have been targeted by the FARC. This war economy provided the FARC with the necessary leverage to confront the state and support their long term struggle.

The FARC's Infrastructure System

The FARC's infrastructure was developed during the strategic defensive phase. However, this system is not static and flexibility is one of its key enablers. In order to develop their infrastructure, they spent decades in the countryside influencing the peasantry, studying the terrain and training their tactics. Once this infrastructure has matured they can advance into the strategic offensive phase.

This system is closely associated with one of their most important strategic objectives: "territorial control". From the security and control perspectives, this relationship could be considered decisive. Their presence over ungoverned territories is

constant and it allows the organization to coerce the peasantry, especially in those areas were spontaneous support does not exist.

The corner stone of their battlefield infrastructure is the "base area". Guerrilla warfare with no bases, says Mao Tse-tung, "is nothing but robbing banditism; unable to maintain links with the population, it cannot develop and is bound to be defeated."[32] It is from these strategically located positions, that the insurgent's projected power to the periphery. Even though this rural based infrastructure could be considered primitive, its importance must not be underestimated.

The base area is surrounded by a "support zone" that provides a defense in depth. Normally, this territorial belt is occupied by a mix of civilians and militias that provide tight security. Not informing the FARC over military presence inside one of these areas leads to immediate assassination. For this reason, avoiding detection while in a military infiltration inside their support zone is very difficult.

This support zone is located inside an "operational zone" which has geographic limits to execute their tactics. This concept is replicated around the country according to geography and weather conditions. This design ensures total control over their occupied territories and people. Well developed clandestine lines of communications are used to connect their urban logistical bases with their heart land.

In the past, the FARC occupied and consolidated areas with no institutional presence and especially with agrarian problems. After the 1980s, they evolved and tried to occupy areas of strategic value, such as those regions where gold, oil, coal, bananas and coca were produced.[33] Today, and as a result of the government's offensive, many of these base areas have been relocated in the borders with Venezuela, Brazil, Peru,

Ecuador and Panama. Jungle or mountainous international borders have become safe havens for drugs, arms, ammunitions, explosives and chemical precursors smuggling. Confronting the FARC in this kind of conditions is a challenge, especially in those areas were there is no military or political support from the neighboring country.

The Colombian Government's New Strategic Response

In Colombia elected governments have the constitutional mandate of designing the national development plan.[34] This process tries to integrate all the elements of national power, in order to promote democratic and economic development. The national development plan is considered the political legacy of every administration. The name given to this grand strategy becomes the way a government will be remembered for years to come. President Uribe's national security strategy is considered the center of gravity of this grand scheme.

In the past, national security and defense topics were marginally mentioned or shyly integrated into the national development plan. Because of this, national security strategy was never an important component of the government's plans. Even in the midst of war, civilian governments tried not to empower the military, to avoid being perceived as militaristic. This happened because of a shortsighted vision, low political responsibility, but especially because of a lack of moral courage and leadership. As a result of this, Colombia's problems were not the product of the guerrillas and paramilitary forces strength, but the result of the immense weaknesses of the state.[35]

Alvaro Uribe's Strategic Vision

In the past, most governments placed "national security" at the end of their list of priorities. When trying to solve Colombia's huge problems "they were overwhelmed by

the dilemma of how to break the vicious cycle between war and poverty."[36] Their plans included social investment, education and economic growth, among many other important topics, as ways to achieve peace and stability.

Unfortunately, these approaches were futile in a country with uncontrollable levels of violence, terrorism and drug trafficking. Under these conditions, "urgency and a strong guiding team are necessary but insufficient conditions for major change. Of the remaining elements that are always found in successful transformations, none is more important than a sensible vision."[37]

Alvaro Uribe's strategic vision was precisely the complete opposite of his predecessors. He had a clear understanding that "vision plays a key role in producing useful change by helping to direct, align, and inspire actions on the part of large numbers of people."[38] When appealing to his constituency he explained that in order to achieve socio-economic growth Colombia had to invest in security first. Expressing these kinds of political priorities in a developing country could be considered political suicide. However, most Colombians perceived Uribe as a strong and straight forward leader.

Uribe's strategic vision was based on a model that he called the "Democratic Security Policy Virtuous Cycle". His approach called for a strong security investment, in which respect for the rule of law and human rights, were considered the key enablers of his democratic proposal.

Figure 3: The Democratic Security Policy Virtuous Cycle.

Once local, regional and country wide security had been achieved, a climate of confidence and stability would attract private investment and economic growth. This economic recovery would guarantee better state revenues and would foster social investment. In the end, these actions would produce social well being and satisfaction. This model was already proven to succeed, since it was previously applied by Uribe at a smaller scale when he was the leading authority of the Department of Antioquia.[39]

Strategic Leadership a Key Enabler

As governor of Antioquia (1995-1997), during the worst years of the FARC's strategic offensive, Alvaro Uribe demonstrated great determination in his quest to unite local governments, the community and the security forces in one fist. His vision and courage inspired the citizens of this region to take a hard stand against terrorism. His

policy actions resulted in an important reduction of all forms of violence and organized crime.

From 2001 to 2002, the FARC launched a terrorist offensive campaign country wide. These terrorist attacks were designed to punish President Andres Pastrana's government, because of the peace process failure. Also, these threats had the purpose of coercing all presidential candidates and their electorate. Indiscriminate terrorist attacks over the poorest sectors of the population produced a "boomerang effect" of rejection towards the FARC.

Only one candidate would have the courage and ability to agglutinate this popular support around a strong vision of hope. Throughout his presidential campaign Alvaro Uribe laid down his strategic vision to achieve security by democratic means. He also explained that social cohesion and economic development were key components of his security proposal. Among many other things, he promised to neutralize the FARC's terrorist acts and offered all the necessary political and economic support to continue strengthening the military forces, the national police and the democratic institutions in general.

On May 31, 2002, Colombians elected President Alvaro Uribe with one clear mandate: to bring the country out of its political, economic and social debacle. The democratic security policy was the strategic framework used by the elected government to strengthen Colombia's democracy.

The basic principles of the democratic security policy were to protect the rights of Colombians and to strengthen the rule of law and the authority of democratic institutions with the support of the citizens.[40] The architecture of this plan was built on five pillars: 1)

Consolidation of state control over the national territory; 2) Protection of the population through the increase of state presence; 3) Destruction of illegal drug trade; 4) Maintenance of a deterrent military capability; 5) Transparent and efficient management of resources.[41]
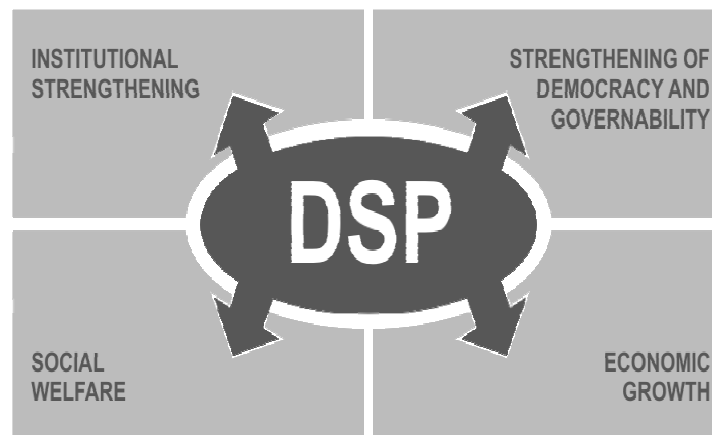

Figure 4: Democratic Security Policy Objectives.

Because of the security and defense implications of this policy, the Military Forces and the National Police became the key enablers of the government's plans. This approach of combining all elements of national power in one purpose brought great interaction between civilians and the military, strengthening these relationships for the long term.

A New View of Civil-Military Relations and Military Strategy

For years Latin America suffered the terrible consequences of revolutionary war. To confront these threats, many countries decided to use undemocratic ways and means. Not in few cases, military dictatorships won the counter insurgency fight at the expense of human rights and international humanitarian law. These short term solutions caused long term structural damages to their democratic and military institutions.

Historically, respect for democracy and civilian control over the military were considered key aspects of Colombia's military culture. However, before 1998 civilian governments tried not to strengthen the military in an attempt to protect democracy from a possible military rule. As a result of this, the military forces and national police were left alone to confront the most pressing state threats, "at a significant cost for civil-military relations and national defense."[42]

In the midst of the FARC's strategic offensive between 1998 and 1999, President Andres Pastrana's administration supported a military transformation that was considered a "strategic revolution."[43] In one year, a well designed and carefully implemented national military strategy, allowed the military to regain the initiative and stop the enemy's offensive.[44] These actions brought the balance of forces in favor of the military, and most importantly, provided the opportunity to confront these threats in a more sophisticated way.

Before 1998, military strategy was the product of improvisation and urgency. Initially Plan Colombia and then Plan Patriota brought campaign planning, operational designs, modernization or transformation programs to the table. The two plans played vital and complementary roles in saving the country's democracy. From the security and defense perspective, for the first time national security strategy and national military strategy condensed international, national, regional and local efforts, over one common purpose.

The government's critics, specially its opposition, considered these plans a "de facto" approach to tackle the country's problems. Regionally, some countries saw them as Washington's impositions and as threats for their own national security. In reality, the

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two strategies placed no threat to Colombia's neighbors and on the contrary, helped to provide more secure borders and to reduce the terrible impact of narco-trafficking.

Today, it is evident that campaign planning, modernization and transformation have not only strengthened the Military Forces and National Police. These processes have produced positive impacts over their professionalism and efficiency. Better educated and experienced military leaders have gained the respect of civilians and support of the population at all levels. In few cases, the interaction between the military and other government agencies have produced some friction. Contrary to old views, political and economic support of the military undoubtedly resulted in better and stronger civil-military relations. Today, these relationships are key elements of the democratic security policy.

Plan Colombia and Plan Patriota

In 1999, the Colombian government, with the support of the United States, began a plan for peace, prosperity and the strengthening of the State called "Plan Colombia."[45] The architecture of this plan was carefully crafted to attack what was considered the "strategic center of gravity" of Colombia's terrorist organizations: narco-trafficking.

This bilateral approach between Colombia and the United States brought not only U.S. resources and capabilities, but also generated a major involvement of national agencies, institutions and resources. For the first time, Colombia was investing billions of dollars to confront the drug threat. Despite the FARC's efforts to present the plan as a direct attack over Colombia's peasantry, the government's planners tried to create a balanced combination between the security and social components.

Before the plan's implementation efforts to attack all stages of narco-trafficking were dispersed and normally under-resourced and under-planned. The military was tangentially involved, while the National Police was left alone to confront a multi-million dollar business, led by violent cartels and a huge terrorist organization, such as the FARC.

As a result of Plan Colombia, important military and police capabilities have been developed and maintained. An example of what the plan has brought was the creation of the Army's first Counter-Narcotics Brigade (CNB) composed of three battalions. This unit was specially organized, equipped and trained to destroy cocaine laboratories, enemy logistical facilities and to provide security for eradication programs in all kinds of terrain, among many other capabilities. In support of this special CNB, Plan Colombia developed an important helicopter force to conduct day and night air assaults. Army aviation units brought flexibility and tactical surprise to the counter-narcotics fight.

The interaction of Plan Colombia with the realities of the battlefield has made the dividing line between counter insurgency and counter narcotics thinner or almost inexistent. Today, it is easier to employ U.S. Plan Colombia or Andean Regional Initiative resources for counter-insurgency, without being conditioned by the counter-narcotics domain.[46] Plan Colombia is by any standards a successful policy due to an effective balance of coherent macroeconomic policies, well-designed social programs, and, advances made to improve security and the rule of law.[47] Unfortunately, motivated by international consumption narco-trafficking continues to provide vital resources to the FARC. Because of this, any action against the narcotics trade causes the FARC's progressive debilitation.

In 2003, a counter insurgency campaign called "Plan Patriota" or "Patriot Plan" was launched by the military forces as part of the new NSS. In the grand scheme of things, the purpose of this plan was to "debilitate the FARC, the National Liberation Army -ELN- and the United Self-defense Forces of Colombia (AUC), and simultaneously force peace negotiations with the last two."[48] The plan was specially designed to confront and neutralize all these insurgencies strategic plans and long term effects.

In order to achieve this goal, the military forces went to important organizational and doctrinal changes. A more joint approach brought into existence the Joint Task Force Omega and the Caribbean Joint Command. Unconventional units were created with surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities. All of the military services reorganized their components and capabilities to specifically defeat the enemy's plans. Army divisions received the mission to neutralize the FARC, eliminate their will to fight and their capacity for offensive action, in order to demobilize and disarm them.

Contrary to what the FARC expected, the first phase of Plan Patriota started not in the southern jungles of Colombia, but in the heart land of the country, the Department of Cundinamarca in which the capital Bogotá is located. For years the FARC carefully located guerrilla fronts around the capital under a unified terrorist command. Their presence in the surrounding areas as well as their use of kidnapping and extortion were asphyxiating the capital.

In one year, Plan Patriota's main effort under Joint Task Force Omega, was able to kill or capture 95% of these fronts. This victory was considered of great strategic importance, because it not only destroyed these fronts militarily, but, most importantly, it

stopped years of FARC efforts and investments in developing their political and logistical nets. This rapid and stunning success was the product of good intelligence, easier mountainous terrain and healthier conditions for the soldiers. The execution of the plan's second phase main effort in the south eastern jungles of the country brought later the opposite conditions.

Once the main effort's mission was completed, it only took few months to make the transition from operating under the central Andean region environmental conditions, into the jungles of the Departments of Meta, Guaviare, Vaupes and Caquetá. Inhospitable terrain, bad weather conditions, and tropical illnesses became the new denominator. The challenges faced by Joint Task Force Omega during the occupation part of this second phase were huge. Difficulties for intelligence gathering, maneuvering of forces, logistics and civic action made this new operational environment even worse.

Erroneously though, this plan has been presented by some analysts as a plan to be executed only in the south eastern regions of the country. For this reason, it is important to clarify that Plan Patriota has applicability all over the country's territory, with clear strategic and operational objectives for all joint commands, divisions, brigades and their equivalents in other services.

National Security Strategy Achievements

The Democratic Security Strategy is a political mechanism designed to protect and guarantee the rights of Colombians, and, to neutralize the threat of terrorism. The government's results are constantly evaluated not only by the administration, but, most important, by the population and its leaders during the President's "town meetings" (consejos comunales in Spanish).[49]

The strengthening of the democratic institutions resulted in the decrease of the following crimes: homicides, kidnappings, piracy, attacks to towns and terrorist actions. All these figures are accompanied by a relevant reduction of human rights complaints against the military forces and national police.
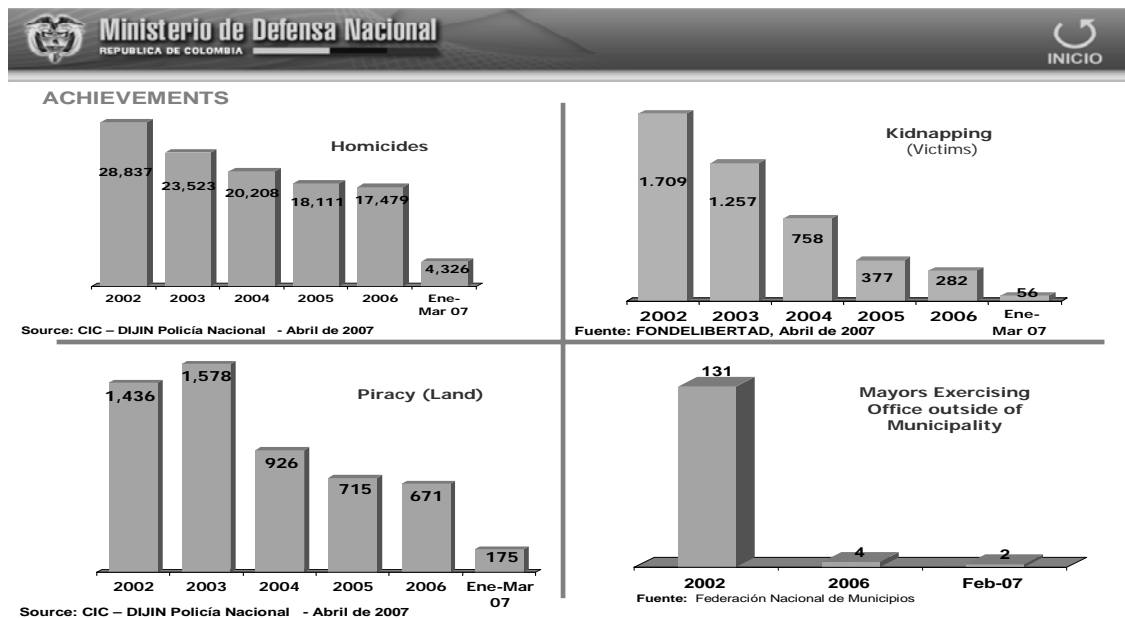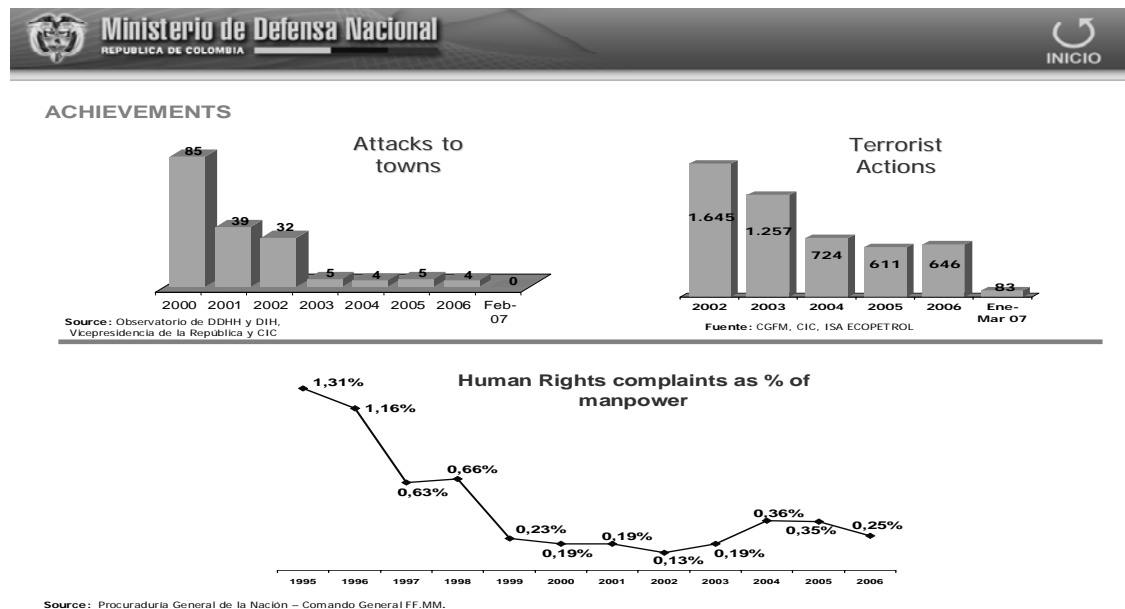

Figure 5: DSP Achievements.

Figure 6: Reduction of Terrorist Attacks and Human Rights Complains.

The counter narcotics strategy resulted in the increase of cocaine seizures and chemical supplies. Destruction of cocaine laboratories and coca crops also increased.
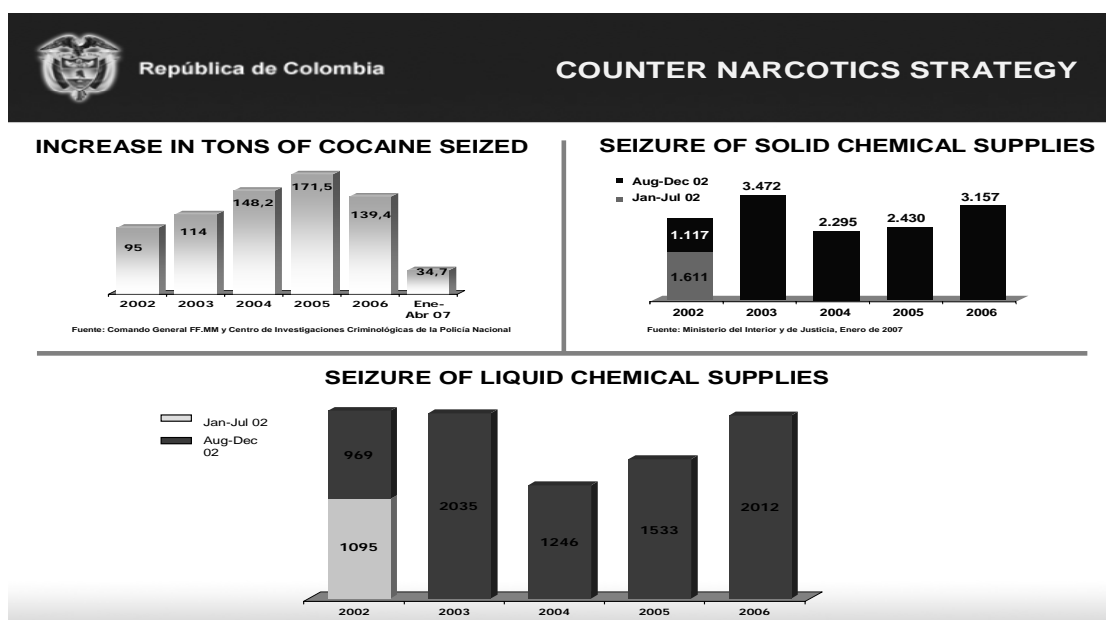

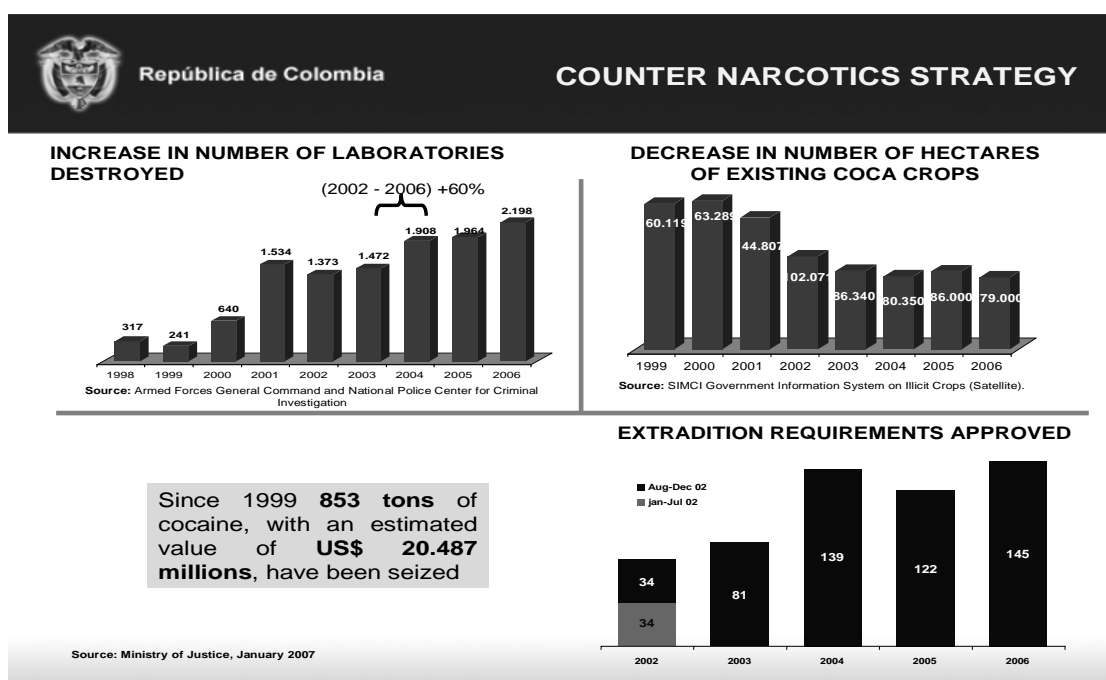Figure 7: Counter Narcotics Strategy Results.

Figure 8: Counter Narcotics Strategy Results.

As for the economy, during 2006 Colombia grew at a rate of 6.95%, the highest since 1978. The most recent figures for the first semester of 2007 show a growth rate of

8.1%. Other leading economic indicators have demonstrated positive results:

Unemployment declined, inflation rates have declined, foreign direct investment

increased and the percentage of Colombians living below the poverty line declined.
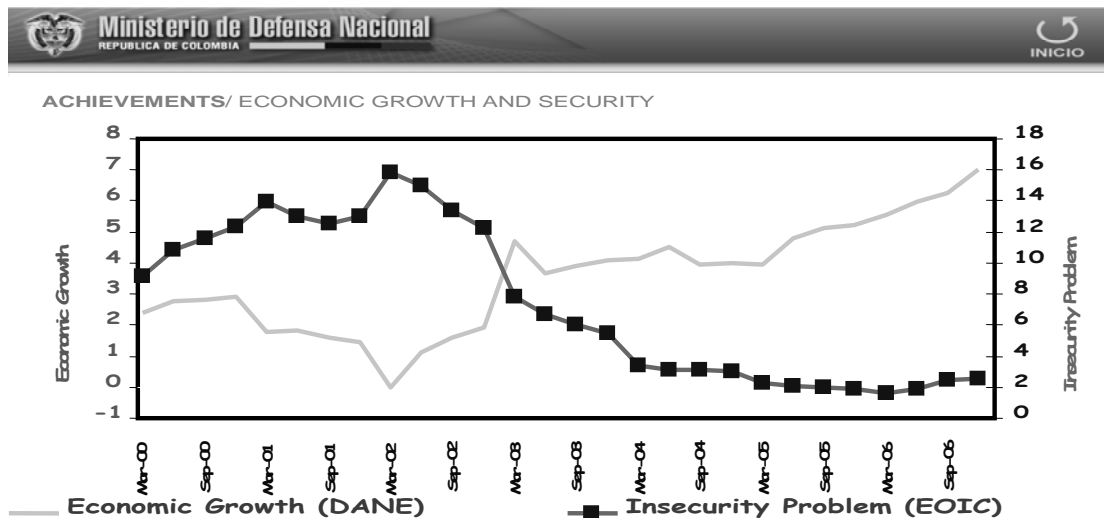

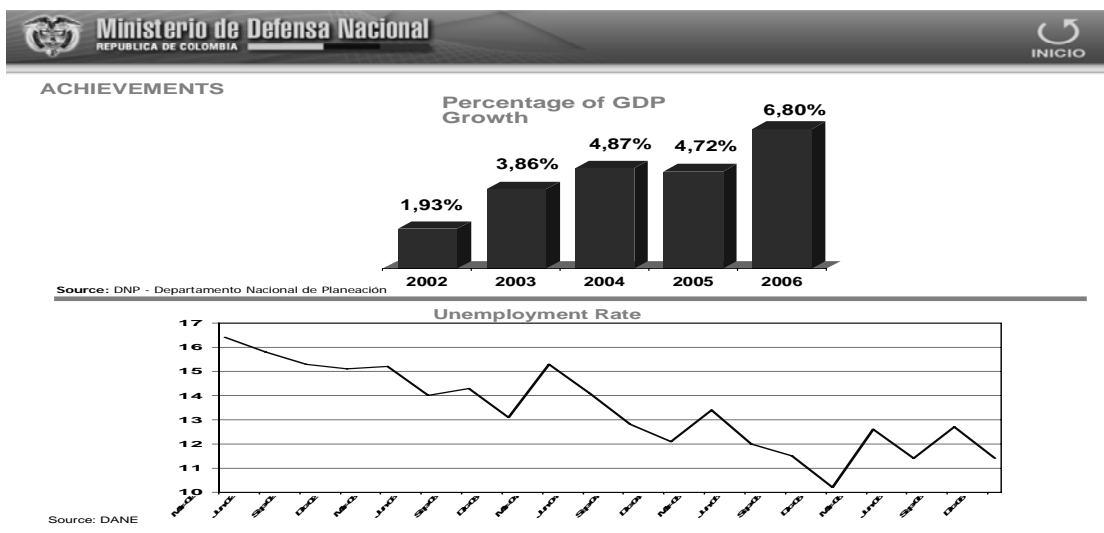Figure 9: Economic Growth and Security.

Figure 10: GDP Growth and Unemployment.

Conclusion

The international implications of the Global War on Terror and the achievements of

the democratic security policy have placed the FARC's revolutionary project into a

military dead end. President Uribe's strategic objectives of strengthening the rule of law and the authority of democratic institutions have clearly gained the support of all Colombians. At the same time, stronger military and police forces have brought the military balance of forces on the government's side.[50]

The government's support of human rights and its continuous investment in security have created a climate of confidence and stability. This new environment has resulted in the demobilization of 30,000 paramilitary forces and advances in the peace process with the ELN. As a result of these actions, there is a clear reduction of the levels of violence and an impressive economic growth.[51]

Doctrinally, it is crystal clear that the democratic security policy achievements have pushed the FARC revolutionary project into the strategic defensive phase. Their use of indiscriminate terrorism and narco-trafficking, combined with open violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, are today demonstrations of their desperate position. These actions have caused an internal degradation expressed in the forms of important desertions among their ranks and a continuous lack of popular support.[52]

Unfortunately, Colombia's war against the FARC's has not been won yet. In their mind set, it is the use of revolutionary warfare, which allowed them to fight in other domains such as the political or international. Their leadership firmly believes that revolutionary warfare equals guerrilla warfare plus political action or (RW = GW + PA). Even though they were forced to go back into the first phase of guerrilla warfare, they will try by all means to be offensive politically. This kind of conviction, supported by their war economy is what makes this a long term challenge.

Today more than ever before, Colombians need to understand the realities of this strategic challenge. The country can not fall again in their evil cycle where negotiating and making concessions were the only possible solutions to our problems, at the expense of liberty and freedom. The country must continue to have the courage to fight this war within the democratic values and institutions. For these reasons, the democratic security policy must become a "state policy" for the next two decades.

Recommendations:

- Colombia's democratic security and defense policy must become a "state policy" for the next two decades. The undisputable progress achieved in all areas of government by this strategic approach, are enough reasons for this path to continue. At the same time, the FARC's strategic culture of long term protracted war represents a clear and future danger for Colombia's democracy.

- Colombia must guarantee the continuation of U.S. support and cooperation for the wars on drugs and terrorism. This strategic partnership between Colombia and the U.S. is considered vital for Colombia's democratic survival.

- Winning international cooperation must become the priority of our international relations strategy. Disrupting the FARC's parallel diplomacy must be one of the key objectives of this effort. At the same time, modernizing Colombia's foreign service is imperative to succeed in this domain.

- Unity of effort between all elements of national power must become the driving force of the democratic security policy and the supporting

plans/programs in the years to come. This key principle needs to be emphasized and applied at all levels.

- The government and its armed forces can not fall into a "false sense of victory." For this reason, legitimacy, perseverance and adaptability are imperatives of this democratic fight. Only a continuous offensive posture at the political, informational, military and socio-economic domains could cause the FARC's to reach its culmination point or to collapse.

- Designing and implementing a new strategy to attack the FARC's political system must become a priority. A top objective of this approach is to create a modern legal framework to confront FARC's long term plans and terrorism. The Ministry of the Interior should be the leading organization in this fight with clear strategic objectives.

- The successful culmination of the political peace processes with the United Self-defense Forces and the National Liberation Army are vital to continue to reduce the levels of violence and at the same time to undermine FARC's credibility and long term objectives.

- Designing and implementing a better and far more aggressive strategic communications campaign must become a top government's priority. A special organization or institution must be in charge of guarantying the unity, clarity and aim of all of the "informational efforts."

- Assessing popular support is one of the most important tools to evaluate the government's results in the war on terror. Because "the battle for the population is a major characteristic of revolutionary war," this aspect must

continue to receive all the attention. [53] Colombian authorities can not misinterpret the neutrality of large sectors of population in the rural areas and urban centers, with support for the government's democratic security policy.[54]

- Strengthening the military forces and national police must continue to be one of the top state priorities. Colombian's tax payers must understand that "armed strength as a threat or a potentiality is the most important factor making for the political power of a nation."[55] Until the FARC have been defeated politically trough negotiations or militarily, this process can not be stopped or reduced.

- Transforming militarily organizations, their personnel management, intelligence, doctrine, operations, training and logistics, must become a defense sector priority. Despite the successes achieved by the 1999 military reform, by today standards, a new and more creative transformation is needed to be able to facilitate the democratic security policy consolidation. Adaptation and innovation to counter FARC's possible mutations need to be considered.

- The impact of a prolonged commitment over military and national police training and education needs to be reduced. For this reason, "education and reeducation of soldiers is one way of sustaining focus and adapting efforts."[56]

- Growing progress in the observance of human rights and international humanitarian law must continue to be an institutional commitment.

- Neutralizing and defeating FARC's terrorist or subversive activities at the urban centers must be part of a unified effort. The lack of teamwork and

cooperation between the military, the police and other security agencies made the possibility of success more difficult. The rationale of competing for individual service success must progress into a more modern approach.

- Protecting and defending military and law enforcement operators against FARC accusations is of great importance for their morale and efficiency. Their illegal economy gives them the financial capabilities not only to prosecute officials in penal courts, but also, to apply a well designed judicial strategy to attack the armed forces legitimacy within the democratic institutional framework.

- Attacking FARC's illegal economic system is a top priority. A financial unified effort that is scientifically designed must undermine the enemy's economic capabilities. There have been some advances in this domain, but results are still not clear and actions are dispersed.

- Protecting the country's economic infrastructure is considered an element of vital importance. Efforts in this area can not be reduced as a result of this new sense of security. FARC is still able to develop an offensive terrorist campaign.

- Colombia's planning, budgeting and programming system must continue to progress. Despite the economic growth, the government needs to do a better job of linking scarce resources to the strategic objectives.

Endnotes

[1] Presidency of the Republic, *Democratic Security and Defense Policy* (Bogota, D.C.: Ministry of Defense, 2003), 7.

[2] David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare, Theory and Practice* (Westport, C.T.: Praeger Security International, 2006), 6.

[3] The concept of strategic culture is a direct descendant of the concept of political culture--which has been debated, developed, variously employed, and even more variously defined by political scientists since the early 1950s. The idea of national style is derived logically from the concept of political culture: a particular culture should encourage a particular style in thought and action. Colin S. Gray, "Comparative Strategic Culture," *Parameters* (Winter 1984); available from http://www.carlisle.army.mil/usawc/Parameters/1984/gray.htm; Internet; accessed 18 January 2008.

[4] "Democratic Security," available from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democratic_security; Internet; accessed10 October 2007.

[5] National Security Strategy a document approved by the President of the United States for developing, applying, and coordinating the instruments of national power to achieve objectives that contribute to national security. U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, Joint Pub 1-02 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Defense, U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, 12 April 2001), 367.

[6] Bernard B. Fall, "The Theory and Practice of Insurgency and Counterinsurgency," *Naval War College Review* (Winter 1998): 46.

[7] Bard E. O'Neal, *Insurgency and Terrorism: Inside Modern Revolutionary Warfare* (Dulles, V.A.: Potomac Books, 1990), 31-52.

[8] O'Neal, 34.

[9] Ibid., 35.

[10] Ibid., 31.

[11] Article 14° of FARC's statutes establish: "The FARC-EP, for its military practice is ruled by the general plans of the Central General Staff, designed by the National Guerrilla Conference, that enforce its compliance to Missions, Commissions, Tactical Combat Units UTC, Squads, Guerrillas, Companies, Fronts, Blocks and the Central General Staff." Translated from FARC's digital files statutes (in Spanish Estatutos de las FARC), from authors personal files.

[12] For decades military intelligence has struggled to know when and where the next FARC National Guerrilla Conference would happen. Since 1964, they have made nine of these strategic planning meetings (1964, 1966, 1969, 1971, 1974, 1978, 1982, 1993 and 2006).

[13] O'Neal, 31.

[14] Ibid.

[15] FARC-EP organization and structure, development, see "Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia," available from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/FARC; Internet; accessed 1 January 2008.

[16] O'Neal, 37.

[17] Ibid., 257

[18] Galula, 14.

[19] Ibid., 36.

[20] Clayton K.S. Chun, "John Warden's Five Ring Model and the Indirect Approach to War," in *U.S. Army War College Guide to National Security Policy and Strategy*, 2d ed., ed. J. Boone Bartholomees, Jr. (Carlisle Barracks, P.A.: U.S. Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, 2007), 362.

[21] Ibid, 362.

[22] Colombian Communist Party (Partido Comunista de Colombia known by the Spanish acronym of PCC) and Clandestine Colombian Communist Party (Partido Comunista Clandestino de Colombia known by the Spanish acronym of PC3).

[23] Eduardo Pizarro, Una Democracia Asediada, Balance y Perspectivas del Conflicto Armado en Colombia (Bogotá: Grupo Editorial Norma, Marzo 2004), 94.

[24] Pretends to penetrate what they call the establishment so that their armed offensive that named as the 'final' has a support of the society. PC3 is the most important infiltration tactic launched by the guerrilla. "The FARC Infiltration Machine is the Colombian Clandestine Communist Partisan (PC3)", El Tiempo, August 2006; available from http://www.fac.mil.co/index.php?idcategoria=13565&facmil_2007=fe2958d2bfc1a59; Internet; accessed 15 November 2007.

[25] Pizarro, 317.

[26] "Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs)," 11 October 2005, available from http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/fs/37191.htm; Internet; accessed 15 November 2007.

[27] Pizarro, 89.

[28] Ibid, 90.

[29] Mao's thoughts on his strategy may be found in Mao Tse-Tung, *Selected Military Writing of Mao* Tse-*Tung* (Peking: Foreign Language Press, 1967); quoted in Michael F. Morris, "Al Qaeda as insurgency," *Joint Force Quarterly* (October 2005); available from http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0KNN/is_39/ai_n15792805/pg_13; Internet; accessed 19 January 2008.

[30] Pizarro, 88.

[31] Ibid., 91.

[32] Galula, 33.

[33] Pizarro, 92.

[34] "Title XII Economic Regime and Public Treasury; Article 339 Developing Plans," *Colombian Political Constitution, 1991*; available from http://pdba.georgetown.edu/ Constitutions/Colombia/col91.html; Internet; accessed 07 December 2007.

[35] Pizarro, 65.

[36] Ibid., 338.

[37] John P. Kotter, *Leading Change* (Boston, M.A.: Harvard Business Review Press, 1996), 7.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Department of Antioquia is the biggest and richest state of the country.

[40] Presidency of the Republic, Democratic Security and Defense Policy, 12.

[41] Presidency of the Republic, The Effectiveness of the Colombian Democratic Security and Defense Policy, August 2002 – August 2003 (Bogota, D.C.: Ministry of Defense, 7 August 2003), 2.

[42] Gabriel Marcella, *The United States and Colombia: The Journey from Ambiguity to Strategic Clarity* (Carlisle, P.A.: U.S. Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, 2003), 7.

[43] Pizarro, 99.

[44] National Military Strategy a document approved by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff for distributing and applying military power to attain national security strategy and national defense strategy objectives. U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, Joint Pub 1-02 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Defense, U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, 12 April 2001), 365.

[45] Embassy of Colombia, *Plan Colombia: A Success Story* (Washington, D.C.: Colombian Embassy, 19 September 2007); available from http://www.colombiaemb.org/opencms/ opencms/trade/Plan_Colombia.pdf; Internet; accessed 8 December 2007.

[46] The Bush administration describes its Andean strategy as "a three-legged stool" of eradication, military assistance, and alternative development. About half of the ARI funds are earmarked for Colombia, including funds for: aerial eradication of drug crops; alternative development; logistical support, hardware, and training for the Colombian Army's counter-narcotics battalions and the Colombian National Police; social and economic programs, including assistance for internally displaced persons; and judicial reform. The remainder is for the region's six other countries—Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, Venezuela, Panama, and Brazil—to support economic development and the rule of law as well as ongoing drug control efforts, including eradication, interdiction, and drug use awareness. Available on Gina Amatangelo, "Andean Regional Initiative: A Policy Fated to Fail," *Foreign Policy in Focus* 6 (July 2001); available from http://www.fpif.org/briefs/vol6/v6n29andean.html; Internet; accessed 18 January 2008.

[47] Embassy of Colombia, *Plan Colombia: A Success Story*, 2.

[48] Pizarro, 303.

[49] For the last 5 years President Uribe has carried out these kinds of meetings in every single town of the country, investing from 12 to 15 or even more hours in listening and understanding the local leaders, communities and civil organizations problems and concerns. During these meetings, the President is accompanied by all his ministers, the military commanders and the directors of the most important civil agencies, among many others. These meetings are televised every single weekend by the official TV channel and the whole country can see "the government in action". *Ley de los Consejos Comunales* (Bogota: Presidency of the Republic, 2002); available http://web.presidencia.gov.co/leyes/; Internet; accessed 10 October 2007.

[50] In relation to the GDP, defense sector expenditures went from 2,2 % in 1990 to 5,0 % in 2006; military forces and national police expenditures grew from 1,6 % in 1990 to 3,3 % in 2006. The size of the military forces grew from 154,878 members in 2002 to 260,229 in 2007. The size of the national police went from 256,167 members in 2002 to 405,729 in November 2007 (this data does not include civilians). The size of professional soldiers grew from 20,276 members in 2002 to 80,111 in November 2007. Information consolidated by the Colombian Ministry of Defense, "Achievements of the Democratic Security Policy of Consolidation," December 2007, e-mail message to author, January 2008.

[51] According to CSIS Report: Back From The Brink: Evaluating Progress in Colombia, 1999-2007, Colombia has made a strong recovery from his low point in 1999, with impressive rates of growth, reduced unemployment, increased levels of investment, expanded trade, lower inflation, and a surge in investor confidence. These gains are closely linked to the improved security and, in turn, help create more jobs in the legitimate economy as an alternative to illegal pursuits. Peter DeShazo, Tanya Primiani, and Phillip McLean, *Back From The Brink: Evaluating Progress in Colombia, 1999-2007* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic & International Studies, 27 November 2007)

[52] The democratic security has produced the voluntary demobilization of 14,329 members of terrorist organizations. The numbers climbed from 1,412 in 2002 to 3065 in November 2007. Information provided by the Presidential Program for Humanitarian Assistance to Demobilized (know by the Spanish acronym of PAHD), to the Colombian Ministry of Defense, "Achievements of the Democratic Security Policy of Consolidation," December 2007, e-mail message to author, January 2008.

[53] Galula, 4.

[54] Recent electoral victories of the leftist Democratic Pole Party in the local elections of the capital city of Bogota and the Department of Nariño, clearly demonstrated the lack of a unified popular support.

[55] Han J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, 5th ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1973), 29.

[56] Robert R. Tomes, "Relearning Counterinsurgency Warfare," *Parameters* (Spring 2004): 26.